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A beautiful flourish. The foundation story of Wroclaw (and Wroclaw residents)

> The point when Wroclaw in 1945 fully becomes a fairy tale, cannot be precisely determined, but we have been heading towards the fairy tale for a long time. Already in the 1950s and 1960s, quite a lot was done to tell Wroclaw's past as a touching legend (Zawada 2015: 59).

In the article, I present the content and the context of the foundation story of Wroclaw – created after 1945 in one of the largest and most destroyed cities which joined Poland after World War II (Polish Western and Northern Territories). The analyzed empirical material consists of personal documents – statements of Wroclaw residents written and submitted in 1966 for the competition entitled: "What does the city of Wrocław mean to you". The most important element of this story about the creation of the city is the figure of a pioneer, shaped in the image of a mythical hero. The features of pioneers (such as courage, uncompromising love for the city and openness to others) have become an important narrative co-creating the discourse about the city in the narratives of subsequent generations of Wroclaw residents.

Keywords: Wroclaw, Western and Northern Territories, discourse analysis, social memory, personal documents

Eine schöne Blütezeit. Die Gründungsgeschichte von Wroclaw (und der Breslauer Einwohner)

In dem Artikel stelle ich den Inhalt und den Kontext der Gründungsgeschichte von Breslau vor – entstanden nach 1945 in einer der größten und am stärksten zerstörten Städte, die nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg an Polen angeschlossen wurde (Polnische West- und Nordgebiete). Das analysierte

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empirische Material besteht aus persönlichen Dokumenten – Aussagen von Breslauer Einwohnern, die 1966 für den Wettbewerb „Was ist die Stadt Breslau für Sie“ geschrieben und eingereicht wurden. Wichtigster Baustein dieser Geschichte über die Entstehung der Stadt ist die Figur des Pioniers, dessen Bild wie ein mythischer Held geformt wurde. Die Eigenschaften der Pioniere (wie Mut, bedingungslose Liebe zur Stadt und Offenheit gegenüber anderen) sind zu einer wichtigen Erzählung geworden, die den Diskurs über die Stadt in den Erzählungen der nachfolgenden Generationen der Breslauer Bewohner mitgestaltet hat.

Schlüsselwörter: Breslau, Westliche und nördliche Gebiete, Diskursanalyse, soziales Gedächtnis, persönliche Dokumente

Piękny rozkwit. Opowieść założycielska Wrocławia (i wrocławian)

W artykule przedstawiam treść i kontekst opowieści założycielskiej Wrocławia – powstałego po 1945 r. w jednym z największych i najbardziej zniszczonych miast przyłączonych do Polski po II wojnie światowej (polskie terytoria zachodnie i północne). Analizowany materiał empiryczny składa się z osobistych dokumentów – wypowiedzi mieszkańców Wrocławia spisanych i zgłoszonych na konkurs „Czym jest dla ciebie miasto Wrocław” w 1966 roku. Najważniejszym elementem tej opowieści o powstaniu miasta jest postać pioniera, którego wizerunek ukształtował się jak mityczny bohater. Cechy pionierów (takie jak odwaga, bezkompromisowa miłość do miasta i otwartość na innych) stały się ważną narracją współtworzącą dyskurs o mieście w narracjach kolejnych pokoleń wrocławian.

Słowa kluczowe: Wrocław, Ziemie Zachodnie i Północne, analiza dyskursu, pamięć społeczna, dokumenty osobiste

1. Introduction

Human life progresses in stories – both inconspicuous everyday experiences and unique events are dressed in the narrative structure that organizes them:

> Narrative patterns, i.e. patterns having the structure of stories about the course of certain events and about the behavior, intentions, feelings of their participants, are a commonly used form of representing knowledge about phenomena and subjects of social life, affecting the way of remembering, understanding and using this knowledge in one's own action (Stemplewska-Żakowicz 2001: 83).[1]

In the research on the socially constructed past, narrative emerges as one of the most important determinants of what will be preserved and updated in the memory of a community[2]: "Narrative structures perform important functions in

[1] All quotations are translated by author of the article, unless otherwise noted.

[2] The study adopts the broad definition of social memory by Andrzej Szpociński, who understands the term as: "all forms of reference to the past that are regulated by culture (as opposed to the sphere of memory regulated by biological factors)" (2009: 227).

every memory culture. We will find them in life stories and in anecdotes gathered by oral history researchers, as well as in oral tradition patterns on which anthropologists focus" (Erll 2018: 228). In other words, each, even the most individual life experience is socialized at the level of discourse – that is, among other things, subjected to the rigors of common, communicatively shared and socially accepted patterns of stories. We read on this subject that:

> Thanks to the common practice of bringing up memories during a conversation, as well as thanks to every book we read or movie we watch, we have learnt that the correct story has its beginning, its middle part and the end. In order for it to be understood, it must follow specific patterns. […] Obviously, narrative patterns differ depending on the culture in which they occur, because the 'meanings' transferred [...] are always culturally conditioned (Welzer 2009: 40, see Erll 2018: 20).

Looking at various events and situations that we experience through the prism of the socially shared narrative structure results in adapting (simplifying) our own experiences to this construction: "everything that is too individual, too unique, that expresses the content too distant from the consciousness of a given social group, is eliminated in favour of what is common, typical and understandable to all" (Simonides 1972: 23). As a consequence, social creation of images of/from the past largely consists in unifying and reducing memories to socially binding narrative patterns, often simply suggested or even imposed by the dominant discourse (see Biskupska 2011: 158). Therefore, to look at the narrative images arising after World War II in the Polish Western and Northern Territories[3], in the following study I adopt the research perspective of *discourse analysis*. I treat discourse as a social practice – as an element simultaneously constructing and constructed by, the social reality (see e.g. Potter 1996). In this perspective, memories, stories, all individual experiences are subject to social negotiation and take the form of socially accepted narratives: they are selected, translated into images and values understood and accepted by the recipients (see Welzer 2009). I assume that the narratives about the beginning of the city that I am looking for, are intersubjectively agreed – constructed and existing at the level of discourse.

[3] To describe the territories annexed to Poland in 1945 under the Potsdam Agreement I use terms: the Western and Northern Territories (the WNT in short) and the so-called Regained Territories. Researchers are still arguing about the legitimacy of the use of specific concepts – due to the limited space, I refer to publications broadly describing the issues (genealogy and ideological entanglement) of the names of these areas – see e.g. Halicka (2015); Siewior (2018).

2. Myth and the foundation story

Contemporarily, in the literature on the subject (works of sociologists, literary scholars, culture scholars and anthropologists), an important category determining (though most often without much thought) the consideration and research on the construction of narrative images of the Western and Northern Territories is a myth. However, if we accept one of the more widespread definitions of the concept, according to which a myth is a "sacred history" storing the beliefs and values of a given community" (Napiórkowski 2014: 237), and mythology is "not a collection of stories, but rather a repertoire of appropriate actions and model ways of reflection" (Napiórkowski 2014: 237), it turns out that this category is becoming too capacious and too complex for some of the research activities undertaken. That is why I agree with Barbara Szacka who states that in most cases the 'myths' described by researchers are 'narrative constructions' (Szacka 2006: 67) and not an insight into the complex, multi-threaded mythical worlds. Therefore, the starting point of my reflections and analyses is a narrative construction, and the foundation story.[4] I will employ the understanding of the term as suggested by Gieba (2015: 322) who defines it as follows: "This will be the basic narrative [...], referring to the experience of the beginning (the foundation – i.e., that relates to the starting moment for the formation of the society of the Western and Northern Territories)" (Gieba 2015: 322).[5] According to the indicated definition, in this study I assume the synonyms of the concepts: founding / foundation / base / elementary story. I also assume that the analyzed threads of the foundation story can be treated as motifs that contribute to the myth defined in the literature on the subject asthe myth of the Regained Territories (see e.g. Wakar 2018). This myth is a multidimensional whole – as emphasized by Andrzej Sakson – having: "specific levels: historical, ethical, geopolitical and socio-ethnic" (Sakson 2018: 148).

3. The Wroclaw foundation story – the context of its creation

I will begin the presentation of the foundation story determining the narrative of the post-war identity of Wroclaw (and its residents) by outlining the cultural and social background shaping its narratives. This context can be described, in the words of

[4] In accordance with the literature on the subject, this article uses the concepts of narrative and story interchangeably – see e.g. Bugajewski, Czapliński (2014: 262).

[5] For me as a sociologist interested in cultural constructions present in the discursive practice of people, it is particularly valuable and worth emphasizing that this category, as well as many other valuable research categories, was proposed by literary scholars. The terminology of literary research on broadly understood narratives is increasingly used by social researchers – as Michel Butor notes: "Storytelling is a phenomenon far beyond the field of literature; it is one of the elements constituting our understanding of reality" (1971: 5).

Andrzej Zawada, as "a sense of insufficient identity" (Zawada 2015: 60) Poles were experiencing whenthey arrivedin the Western and Northern Territories after World War II. This identity deficiency resulted, among others, from the lack (or obsolescence) of socially shared narratives, which usually connect man with others and with the space of life. First, repatriates and settlers arriving at the Territories needed new stories about themselves. They were marked by the war and post-war trauma – the terror and destruction of war, often years of wandering, detachment from the places where they had felt at home.[6] Secondly, they needed stories about the community they were to create. Especially in larger cities, the population was a cultural mosaic composed of people with various life experiences, unequal social status and different motives for settling in the Western and Northern Territories. Thirdly, those arriving in these areas needed stories about the territory that had become their new home – the cultural landscape of the areas they were arriving in was semantically foreign and incomprehensible.[7] Fourthly, and finally, the new hosts needed a story about a stable future – settling in the Western and Northern Territories was filled with a feeling of uncertainty about the later fate of these lands and their inhabitants.[8]

The indicated narrative deficits defining the framework of everyday life of the residents in the Territories also determined the existence of the first post-war generation of Wroclaw inhabitants. It was then crucial to create stories that unite and allay the anxieties of Wroclaw settlers and repatriates. As Andrzej Zawada aptly notes:

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[6] As Beata Halicka notes, the brutal detachment from the place of pre-war existence often had very negative consequences for the quality of life in the post-war realities of the WNT, especially for people displaced from the territories annexed to the USSR after the war: "Depending on their physical and spiritual well-being, the time they took to make themselves at home in the new neighborhood and made contact with it, varied. However, not everyone succeeded, in some cases the needs did not go beyond the basic level of physiology and safety. Those people have sealed themselves in their lives, encapsulated themselves, thus losing the opportunity to meet social needs or the need for recognition or self-fulfillment. At the same time, they often deteriorated in health, for years ready to move to another place or staying in the trauma caused by the war" (2015: 217).

[7] Olga Tokarczuk outlines the questions that could mark this narrative vacuum of everyday life of the post-war inhabitants of these areas: "Hunger for a myth, hunger for a story that will unite this cracked world, that will tame space and time [...]. Why was this little chapel built in the forest? […] Who lived in the palace? Is it true that there was a windmill on the pass? Where did the road lead that ends suddenly in the forest? […] Our predecessors took their memories with them, and we were thrown into the world without memory" (2001: 49).

[8] This uncertainty shaped decades of life in these areas – this is evidenced, inter alia, by the following words: "Continuous uncertainty as to whether these areas will permanently persist with Poland, the temporary nature of the farms being given over for use, the hope of imminent return to home villages [...] produced some kind of reserve in relation to the newly inhabited, foreign land. The process of taking over the German areas by Poles became a definitive fact within a few years. However, in the psychological sense it lasted incomparably longer. Despite official declarations, the sense of instability lasted very long. Only after 1970 did the collective imagination slowly cease to be affected by the vision of strangeness and German landscape" Brencz (1997: 196).

> In fact, the question about the founding myth is a question about birth records. Is Wroclaw of good origin? Does Wroclaw have parents it can willingly acknowledge? Is Wroclaw a cultural orphan? It is dreadful to think what would happen if someone declared that the godfather of Wroclaw is Joseph Stalin – after all, it was him who drew the western border of post-war Poland on the map (Zawada 2015: 59).

What narrative images made up the image of the city in the 1940s? On the following pages I am attempting to answer this question – I am going to present the threads creating the story of the beginnings of Wroclaw that were present in the colloquial discourse of the first generation of Wroclaw residents. My analysis is based on the publication entitled "Związani z miastem…" Opracowanie i fragmenty wypowiedzi nadesłanych na konkurs „Czym jest dla Ciebie miasto Wrocław". [*Attached to the city. A compilation and excerpts of the statements sent for the competition: What does the city of Wroclaw mean to you*] (Jałowiecki 1970). This is a presentation of extensive fragments of twenty statements – personal documents[9] awarded and honored in the competition "What is the city of Wroclaw to you."[10] Thanks to the sociologists evaluating the competition entries, the rewarded (and selected for publication) memories are colorful narratives written from a private perspective and referring to the ordinary everyday life of Wroclaw residents – only slightly marked by the language of the then political propaganda. That is why this book is a valuable source of knowledge for the modern reader, among others, about the shaping of the identity of the inhabitants of the Polish Wroclaw in the first decades of the city's existence.

The publication in question opens with a detailed and thorough study of the research material, prepared by Janusz Goćkowski and Bohdan Jałowiecki (Goćkowski, Jałowiecki 1970). However, the issues of constructing discursive images of the city, and more precisely the creation and reproduction of foundation stories – were not the subject of considerations forthe abovementioned researchers[11], which allows me to re-read – reanalyze – the indicated empirical material precisely from this narrative perspective.[12]

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[9] Sociologists developing the indicated empirical material characterize it in this way: "The documents we use are [...] of a special type; they are neither diaries nor biographies in the strict sense of the word, but statements on a specific subject, limited by rather detailed instructions." Goćkowski, Jałowiecki (1970: 20).

[10] The competition was organized in 1966 by the Wroclaw Branch of the Polish Sociological Association and the Culture Department of the Presidium of the National Council of the city of Wroclaw. The jury of the competition consisted of significant representatives of Polish sociology: Józef Chałasiński, Jan Szczepański, Aleksander Wallis, Janusz Goćkowski and Bohdan Jałowiecki. 198 people responded to the competition.

[11] In the 1960s, in sociological literature (which was represented by both researchers), the city's space was seen primarily through the prism of macrostructural issues undertaken in the perspective of quantitative research (see e.g. Kaltenberg-Kwiatkowska 2007).

[12] I use the concept of reanalysis in accordance with the definition proposed by Marta Karkowska and Magdalena Bielińska, according to which this term means: "a return to previously collected

4. The beginning of the story – ruins and pioneers

The story of Wroclaw in most of the analyzed diaries begins in the same place. This is a detailed account of a contact with the burning ruins of the "stump city", presented from the perspective of a witness / participant in the events – adding the narrator to the group of pioneers – urban heroes, which I will introduce in a moment. Here are examples of such narratives:

> In the distance there is a foggy panorama of the stump city. […] The further we go, the stronger the fear. Ashes around us. […] We are getting deeper and deeper into the winding streets inside the city, among the heaps of debris and rubble hanging overhead. Horror, discouragement is rising. Dismay. What have we come here for? Maybe it's better to go somewhere further? This city is almost dead! […] And yet, on this slowly clearing up day, we managed to see that in the midst of this destruction there are those who had chosen this city a year before us and worked with hope and enthusiasm (7) (Jałowiecki 1970: 162).[13]

> In March 1947, I moved with my whole family to a permanent residence in Wroclaw. We were greeted by terrible destruction, ashes and debris, and on top of it, often makeshift crosses. The city, except for peripheral settlements and individual houses in the city center, did not exist. I thought that it would take 100 years to rebuild, and yet I decided to stay in place (13) (Jałowiecki 1970: 236–237).

In the analyzed statements, contact with the city is constructed using three narrative elements. The first of these is the image of the city – the dark scenery of the ruins and the destruction that the narrators find. The city landscape outlined in the diaries of the first post-war months is dead, empty, dark.[14] Amid the scenery

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empirical data (created in the original research process) in order to subject them to repeated analytical procedures" (2019: 23).

[13] The number in brackets indicates the order of interviews in the analyzed publication. Due to the limited space, I give a maximum of two (or three in the case of short quotes) fragments of the statements.

[14] What is discursively significant is the emptiness and the namelessness of the described ruins, emphasized by the narrators. Pre-war residents – Germans – still living in the city, do not appear in the diaries: see Halicka (2015: 303–308), also the pre-war city name – Breslau is not once mentioned in the entire publication. That namelessness of the found destruction had a taming and even therapeutic function – without a name the ruins were losing their aggravating pre-war identity. Andrzej Zawada writes about it: "In 1945 Poles received a foreign city and they would not be able to accept or support its expressive strangeness. However, the strangeness of the city significantly weakened as a result of its destruction. Which was a favorable circumstance. Strangeness in a state of ruin no longer has the strength to encourage continuation or provoke contestation. Ruins are simply to be cleaned." (2015: 78).

constructed in this way, the narrators themselves appear – this is the second topic of the story about meeting the city – they write about their fear, uncertainty and disappointment in a very hostile area. Then the third theme of the story is introduced – those who arrive in the ruins come across those who "live in the middle of this destruction [...] and work with hope and enthusiasm." Those first newcomers who are eagerly clearing dead rubble and also change the attitude of the next ones coming to the city, are pioneers. The figure of a pioneer refers to the figure of a mythical hero – pioneer traits such as courage, non-conformist actions, taking challenges against adversity, sense of freedom (they choose a burning rubble as their place on earth) and love for life (they revive a dead city) come from this semantic field (see Trzciński 2019). The figure of a pioneer, like the character of a mythical hero, by his presence alone tames, rationalizes and justifies the difficult decision to live in ruined Wroclaw:

> The idea [of the hero] allows [...] to direct specific actions of individual people and groups created by them. [...] the existence of a heroic character, i.e. one that confirms in the mythical consciousness [...] the existence of a sphere outside the changing, unstable and dubious world, is necessary for broadly understood, adaptive reasons (Trzciński 2006: 15).

In the analyzed material, pioneer features become a way of presenting Wroclaw residents in general. In other words, the inhabitants of Wroclaw per se are energetic and brave nonconformists, firm in their actions.[15] Let us take a closer look at the following statements:

> In 1949, my mother, being the leading worker, was sent on holiday to Pobierowo as a reward. People were afraid to go there, they were talking about bombs buried on the beach. My mother decided that we would go nevertheless. I think that it was an attitude very characteristic of her and of all other people who also moved to Wroclaw – it was her courage, her conviction that someone always has to be first, also her faith that everything would be alright (5) (Jałowiecki 1970: 141).

> Typical Wroclaw residents are active and have the energy of a young society. They somehow process the traditions of the pioneer period. Their activity is manifested in an engaged attitude towards their city: clearing rubble, cleaning boulevards, clearing

[15] It is worth noting here that most of the first generation of Wroclaw residents wrongly claimed (or attributed to others) the pioneer title. As stated in the Regulations of the Pioneers Section at the Wroclaw Enthusiasts Society, only those who came to the city between 9 May and 31 July 1945, i.e. before the Potsdam conference defining the post-war fate of Breslau, were Wroclaw pioneers – see Suleja (2001).

> snow. […]. Wroclaw residents know and value the rank of their city. They do not like it when Warsaw or Cracow take away its privileges. They protest. However, they do not do it in a tearful way. They talk like equals. They demand. (6) (Jałowiecki 1970: 150–151).

Only in one of the diaries have I found a passage breaking this dominant narrative – showing Wroclaw residents in a way that does not match the image of brave pioneers. Its author emphasizes the feeling of confusion and depression accompanying the post-war newcomers. A clue to understanding this passage may be the enigmatic expression "from there – where they had nothing, they did not count." This term most probably refers to migrants who represented the poorest and forcibly displaced rural population from the eastern outskirts of Poland:

> I came back [from a trip to Warsaw] and Wroclaw seemed to me grey, provincial, the train station like a mock-up castle in a bad taste, some common people, unfriendly. I was sad. I am one of them [...] There is a huge percentage of people who do not believe in themselves in Wroclaw – whether an official or a worker – people who still bear the mark of relations from there – where they had nothing, they did not count. To some extent, these people shape the face of our city. There is no cure for this (5) (Jałowiecki 1970: 145).

A trace of this image of Wroclaw residents – deprived of (pioneer's) energy and optimism – can also be found in the description made nine years after the war (and ten years before the analyzed statements were created). These are the words of Charles Wassermann, a Canadian journalist of Austrian origin, who visited Wroclaw in the fall of 1956 and described the passers-by whom he met on the streets of the city which was still full of debris and bomb funnels:

> If you hoped to see faces of happy people, it would be in vain. [...] here you could just meet people in miserable clothes, with pale, apathetic, bored faces. It seemed that we could see foreigners roaming around who did not know who they were, let alone where they were (Wassermann 2018: 228).

In the analyzed discourse of Wroclaw residents, the narrative of pioneer heroes superseded memories of other categories of migrants arriving in the city in the first post-war years. To more fully indicate the characteristics of these groups, one can reach for Beata Halicka's work on the Nadodrze estate (2015). Halicka suggests the following typology of the newcomers (it is noteworthy that the author uses the narrative scheme of "enthusiastic" pioneers):

> Therefore, those locked up in a 'cultural capsule' should include war victims and people for years on the move. As citizens of the world, one can define constantly moving post-war business people, including many looters, using the chaos prevailing in the 'Polish Wild West' for personal enrichment. On the border between world citizens and cultural fugitives there are enthusiastic pioneers of 'Recovered Territories' who, on behalf of the state, created from scratch a new administration and social structures [...]. A separate group are the so-called autochthons, i.e. the local people. Many of them were expropriated, and often deprived of their rights, which was the reason why they could not be attributed to the real role of autochthons. This function was performed more often by the first settlers – usually former forced labourers who knew the area well and set new rules depending on their competence (Halicka 2015: 216–217).

In the context of Wroclaw, the above description should be supplemented with the remark that many migrants who, tempted by propaganda promises, came to this extremely devastated city, left it in a hurry in search of easier living conditions in other areas of Lower Silesia (see Kaszuba 1997: 26).

In the analyzed research material, the only incidentally indicated group of post-war newcomers, apart from pioneers, are looters. However, looters – people who came for a while – searched the abandoned flats, factories and streets and then disappeared without a trace – were neglected by the narrators, who denied them (so important for themselves) the name of Wroclaw residents[16]:

> People, with a perseverance of ants, were organizing their nests and giving life to their surroundings. There was some persistence and stubbornness in this seemingly hopeless desire to bring life back to the city. But unfortunately, in addition to people who, together with us, sappers, removed the remains of war, there were also those who, like jackals with sacks on their backs, walked on the ruins of Wroclaw, rummaged in them, choosing what was more valuable, often needed by the city and took it somewhere far away. Then, for the first time, the decision to stay in this city rose forever. (20) (Jałowiecki 1970: 331).

> In the first post-war years, many people treated Wroclaw only as a temporary place of residence, as a place where it was easy to get rich. Hence the 'looting', house devastation, not investing a penny in the occupied rooms. After a few years, the situation began to clear up. Those who treated Wroclaw as a temporary place of residence – left. Those who stayed, put too much effort and heart into this city to move anywhere (8) (Jałowiecki 1970: 181).

[16] For more on the subject of looting in the post-war Poland, a phenomenon evading an unambiguous assessment – see Zborowska (2019).

In the analyzed statements, Wroclaw residents are those who, 'as pioneers', without looking at other life options, chose a difficult existence in the post-war ruins. An interesting aspect of the identity structure of the 'Wroclaw resident' was a certain contradiction in the approach to the German heritage present in the destroyed Wroclaw. On the one hand, as I have already mentioned, the inhabitants of Wroclaw carefully avoided the topic of the German origin of the settled houses, but on the other they defended this unnamed heritage – for example, they were critical of the removal of (German) goods from the city – whether through the looters already mentioned or through the official route for the reconstruction of other cities, especially Warsaw, for example:

> There was the slogan: "the whole nation is building the capital." Not only us, but also others worked on rebuilding Warsaw. No one talked about Wroclaw at that time. The residents of Cracow and Poznan managed by themselves, but there were no "residents of Wroclaw". People in Wroclaw saw how bricks and other materials were taken from the destroyed houses, and often from still good ones, to rebuild the capital. This was certainly necessary and right, but it did not help the creation of a community of Wroclaw citizens (20) (Jałowiecki 1970: 334).

5. Attached to the city

An important motif of the pioneer story is the attachment to the rebuilt city (interestingly, the volume in which these diaries were published was entitled 'Attached to the city'). As I have already emphasized, pioneers, despite the obvious difficulties in their daily lives, decided not to abandon the urban ruins and focused their energy on saving the city. This thread is very important for the discursive structure of relations with the city of all its post-war residents – this bond is most often described as deep and unique. Wroclaw is for its inhabitants a place that you uncompromisingly and unconditionally love and which cannot be (easily) left.

> Wroclaw is an exclusive city. The only city you can like, dislike or feel anything else. It seems to me that love for a place lies in the human nature. (5) (Jałowiecki 1970: 142).

> If we were to tell people that they could go where they came from, even to big cities like Lviv – I doubt there would be many who would like to go. Wroclaw has something in itself – something which binds. I would not like to go anywhere from Wroclaw (16) (Jałowiecki 1970: 279).

> Once, a long time ago, I decided that Wroclaw would be my home forever. (20) (Jałowiecki 1970: 32).

The strength of this narrative strategy is also evident in the fact that it was reproduced by people who adopted it in the late 1950s – because they were either born after the war in the city or arrived during that period:

> I liked Wroclaw very much and I strongly claim that even if it were necessary for me to emigrate from Wroclaw to any other corner of the country, I would forever be a Wroclaw citizen deep down in my heart. And not only because it is, after all, my hometown, but because of the huge and ardent attachment to the city, because of patriotism (3) (Jałowiecki1970: 121).

> I love our city and, despite the most tempting proposals to move to another one, I wouldn't move. Why? It's too late now. I have already got too attached to Wroclaw, I would always miss the city in which I lived so well, which I liked as much as my 'home town' (19) (Jałowiecki 1970: 327–328).

It is worth mentioning at this point an important stylistic procedure present in the analyzed material. When describing the fate of the city, Wroclaw residents often use personification – Wroclaw is born and grows with the arrival of its Polish inhabitants:

> Together with the city, we survived our own and its childhood, we entered adulthood together, we are experiencing a beautiful flourish (2) (Jałowiecki 1970: 110–111).

> […] Also, my friends and colleagues after demobilization began to look for support in Wroclaw. One helped the other, shared their apartment and food they had acquired with difficulty. They breathed a calm, unpolluted atmosphere. They took up work, study and started families. (…) They grew into the city, into its problems, worries, troubles and joys (9) (Jałowiecki 1970: 185).

> The difficult beginnings were an adventure. […] Wroclaw – the post-war one – was growing right before my eyes. I have also contributed to its reconstruction. I have known Wroclaw since its inception, its past, ups and downs, its monuments. This makes Wroclaw even more my city (16) (Jałowiecki 1970: 276).

The reasons for the popularity of this approach to the city can be found in its post-war namelessness. This identity emptiness of the destroyed city was attractive to newcomers – it allowed to create a narrative connection or similarity between the people and the city, both deprived of the past. Wroclaw has become a real companion of the post-war misery – as one of the writers stresses: "We attach to the city, we miss it, we love it, just as we do people" (Jałowiecki 1970: 142).

Therefore, Wroclaw not only accepts the residents' full commitment, but also pays back the post-war wanderers, giving them shelter, and later social advancement, a comfortable, stable life, and a certain future:

> Everything we've got – my mother and siblings – we've gained through hard, honest work of my mother and constant sacrifices of us all. Above all, the city made us aware that we are not intruders. We were like everyone else – the newcomers. We all started from scratch. The city gave us a flat and a job, it gave us a start. (5) (Jałowiecki 1970: 147).

> [...] I came to Wroclaw as a 'bezprizorny' [homeless child] loner, after six years in captivity. The city received me hospitably. […] I began to sleep in a real bed, with a down pillow, not straw under the head, under the covers (even a down comforter) instead of a rough blanket. It's not only 'through the stomach to the heart' – 'through a comfortable bed' also works (15) (Jałowiecki 1970: 263).

In the entire empirical material, I found only one statement that contradicted the dominant narrative threads about a deep and close relationship with the city. In the mentioned passage, the author emphasizes that the difficult environment of post-war life repelled, and discouraged him from staying in Wroclaw:

> There was no deeper bond. Anyway, there really wasn't much to love or to admire. This city was a great pile of rubble, especially in the district in which I stayed often. From Klecina to Śródmieście – it was a giant heap of debris with small oases of individual houses. Apart from a few exceptions, Śródmieście did not please the eyes either. Shabby, dirty, neglected houses, with clear signs of progressing destruction. The only district where one would willingly stay was the area around Hala Ludowa ("People's Hall"). It was really beautiful there. (18) (Jałowiecki 1970: 291).

In this statement the city is presented superficially – on the aesthetic level ('it did not please the eyes'). The detachment is also present at the linguistic level – the author writes about his experiences in the third person ('where one would willingly stay'), and also avoids personification of the city ('there was not much to love').

6. Wroclaw – an open / multicultural city

Living in the post-war Wroclaw was a challenge not only because of the difficulties of everyday existence. The people arriving in the city came from many very different cultural and social backgrounds, they came from different regions

of Poland and Europe (see e.g. Kaszuba 1997; Halicka 2015). This cultural clash made it difficult to establish relationships with other people and the place, which is why the task of the pioneer story about the beginnings of Wroclaw was to silence the sense of alienation and misunderstanding present among migrants. The pioneers' Wroclaw is presented as a city of people who are equal and friendly towards all those who want to become Wroclaw residents. This tale of equality and kindness of the post-war residents of the city (both towards each other and towards visitors/strangers) is legitimized with detailed descriptions of (early post-war) personal experiences of the authors. For example:

> We all started in a foreign environment, in an unknown area. Every one of us – and that's why we didn't feel lonely (5) (Jałowiecki 1970: 147).

> I was in the sixth grade of the Second Elementary School from the second semester of the 1945–1946 school year. It was a mixed environment. Children of workers, ex-peasants, private initiative, teachers, intelligence of all caliber up to and including a professor at a university. […]. In this mix everyone was exotic in their own way and I didn't stand out with my eastern intonation. […] Soon I stopped being a newcomer. Every month more newcomers came. They were a sensation for a moment, but soon blended into the class mosaic (6) (Jałowiecki 1970: 153–154).

The above-mentioned narrative about the equality of the residents resulting from cultural dissimilarities became the basis of the pattern weaved into most of the analyzed stories about the openness and good will of Wroclaw residents towards all who came (even for a short time) to the city in the following post-war years:

> There were no better or worse [settlers – KB]. There was no Polish district that was harassed or persecuted in any way. A newcomer did not feel strange here, as happened in many other Polish cities. They could feel a friendly atmosphere around (14) (Jałowiecki 1970: 250).

> In my opinion, the face of Wroclaw is calm, no feverish rush so characteristic of the cities of Warsaw, Poznan or others. There was no harsh, often gross rudeness that could be found in other cities. This means that every person – whether a Wroclaw resident or a visitor – feels good here (20) (Jałowiecki 1970: 332–333).

This sense of community of Wroclaw residents is treated by the authors as obvious and natural. There are few examples in the descriptions of the city and its inhabitants that are less positive about building a post-war community of

residents. One of these statements is given below. The author more realistically characterizes the emotional baggage with which people came to Wroclaw after the war, and indicates the significant consequences of these initial conditions for the subsequent slow shaping of relations between the city's inhabitants:

> [...] people brought with them too many psychological effects from the "times of contempt": tragic experiences, causing various distortions, bitterness, lack of faith in people, "death to losers" slogans or animal egoism and cynicism. The first contact with others in Wroclaw was often a struggle to get a roof over one's head through all available means: bribery, deception, and often even burglary or "squatting" [...] In our Wroclaw conditions it is difficult to see the symptoms of a clear and strong bond. Of course, it is being born, of course, we are not indifferent to whether 'Slask' F.C. will remain in the first league or not. The frequent delight of visitors over the beauty of the city fills us with pride, we are waiting impatiently when Wroclaw will finally become a half-million metropolis. There is no doubt, however, that the concept of 'us Wroclawians' is being developed more slowly and harder (15) (Jałowiecki 1970: 267–268).

In addition to the widely and indisputably accepted assumption that in Wroclaw "no one is better or worse" and that everyone "feels good here", in the analyzed material you can find (placed in different contexts) passages condemning specific behavior of representatives of the first generation of Wroclaw residents. Above all any attempts to transfer the features of rural life into the (large) urban space are subject to criticism:

> Inhabitants of Wroclaw, who mostly came from eastern Poland and from behind the Bug river, clung to their habits brought to these areas of western Poland. On warmer afternoons and public holidays, the residents would sit in front of their houses on the sidewalks or on chairs brought from homes, gossiping and sipping vodka. Sidewalks of downtown streets and even around the Market Square were buried in potato waste and crushed bread thrown away for pigeons (13) (Jałowiecki 1970: 240).

> (…) Some maliciously call Wroclaw a large village. Maybe it was influenced by some habits of the population, which for the most part came from villages. There were, after all, those who saw a tram – a wagon running on the city streets – in 1945 for the first time in their lives. Then they got into the wagons through doors and windows (trams usually didn't have window glass at that time). And just try to tell such a person that they are getting through the rear bridge! Until recently, people talked about those who had a cow (!) in the bathroom or soil in the tub, and some vegetables, and in the toilet – a pantry (16) (Jałowiecki 1970: 277).

Discursive presentation of Wroclaw as a “large village” did not survive in the contemporary stories about the city. On the other hand, the story of openness towards strangers outlined above, which characterizes the first generation of the city’s residents, was woven into the story of Wroclaw as a multicultural metropolis – the ‘meeting place’ created after 1989 in public discourse.[17] However, as demonstrated by the works of sociologists (see e.g. Dolińska, Makaro 2013), these narrative themes proposed by the local government, although accepted by the residents, operate only at a declarative level – they are not reflected in the social practices of Wroclaw’s residents. There is also a fundamental difference between constructing multiculturalism in the foundation story in question, and activities undertaken by the municipal government many decades later.[18] The motif of pioneering ‘multiculturalism’ was related to overcoming differences resulting from the diversity of the place (the region) of origin and social position of residents, while the municipal government creates the image of Wroclaw as a European metropolis respecting its diverse ethnic and religious heritage.[19]

7. Conclusion

In the collected narratives, a key element of the story about the beginnings of (the Polish) Wroclaw is the figure of a pioneer – created to fit the ideal of the mythical hero. According to the pioneer story, the city was created and developed thanks to the arrival of these bold, uncompromising, but also open to others, heroes. The foundation story constructed in such a way fulfilled its task – it tamed the culturally and ideologically alien space, gave a meaning to the post-war existence of migrants and later created the city’s identity that is understandable and attractive

[17] Robert Traba noticed this creation of Wroclaw in public discourse: “the most original, local historical policy – in my opinion – was created by Wroclaw, building its image as a multicultural Central European metropolis” (Traba 2006: 54).

[18] As Wojciech Browarny emphasizes, the precursor of thinking about Wroclaw as a “meeting place” was the literary scholar and essayist Tadeusz Mikulski, associated with Wroclaw since the 1940s, who in his works “created [...] the topos of Wroclaw as a ‘bridge’ or ‘isthmus’ to the West, the Polish ‘train station’ to Europe and the ‘city of meetings’ on the road of rapprochement between ideas, people, communities and civilizations. Today, this topos belongs to self-definitions, and the slogan ‘Wroclaw – the meeting place’ has been the official promotional slogan of the city since 1998” (2012: 353).

[19] In addition, as noted by Andrzej Zawada, the idea of multiculturalism proposed by the Wroclaw authorities is a way to avoid facing the unobvious and ambiguous, but still shaping the city landscape, the remains of Breslau: “A peculiar myth of multiculturalism in parts of the Western Lands, e.g. Wroclaw or Gdansk, acts as a factor weakening, or ‘softening’ the former Germanism visible on a daily basis, especially in the architecture and the civilizational shaping of the landscape” (Zawada 2015: 93).

to the residents. Despite the passage of years, the pioneer story outlined in the analyzed documents is still indirectly present in the discourse of the elites after 1989 – for example through the popularized image of Wroclaw as a city open and friendly to all (the slogan mentioned above: 'Wroclaw – the meeting place'). In recent years, there have also been direct references to that pioneer story – an attempt to weave it into the contemporary tale of the city created by the inhabitants of Wroclaw, mostly in publications referring to the memories of the first residents of the city, describing in detail the hardships of life in the post-war Wroclaw (see e.g. Okólska 2018; Mielewczyk 2018).

However, the story of the beginnings of Wroclaw can also be viewed from a different perspective – as a monothematic settlement narrative, turning its back on the pre-war past. This category was proposed by Inga Iwasiów, defining it as a story "without a beginning, without an end, with ghostly 'autochthons' and an optimistic vision of the community, with the deep Slavonic mythology of 'our kind' cut off by the border [...] from the everyday experience of strangeness of space, architecture, and inscriptions" (Iwasiów 2012: 209). In this approach, the pioneer story is a total tale – superior and ignoring (excluding?) motifs that are mismatched, uncomfortable from the perspective of the dominant discourse. In this foundation narrative there are no references to the experience of loss, long-term longing (also felt by the Germans leaving these lands – absent in the story of pioneers), the lack of a sense of being at home and the lack of a sense of community and belonging among a culturally diverse influx of population. The foundation story outlined in this study also avoids the subject of the difficult heritage – it carefully avoids the issue of everyday existence surrounded by streets, houses and objects left by pre-war residents. This emotional, but also selective, picture of a pioneer relationship with the city contributed to the fact that the space of ordinary life marked by the remnants of Breslau remained unnamed, untold, unexplained for many years – both at the level of colloquial discourse of Wroclaw residents, and in public discourse.

Besides, Wroclaw – as a subject of research – has not been and still is not an exception in this respect. Andrzej Brencz, describing post-war social research conducted in the Western and Northern Territories, emphasized:

> One of the issues that has not been comprehensively addressed to this day is the problem of adaptation of foreign cultural heritage, especially in the field of material culture, covering not only the immediate material environment of people, i.e. apartments, buildings, but the entire infrastructure of the city and the entire environment, which, after all, the settlers found as alien (Brencz 1997: 194).

It was only at the beginning of the 21st century that researchers began to raise the issue with stories saturating everyday life of the descendants of settlers in the

"Regained Territories" in the (still?) foreign cultural landscape. Questions posed by historian Robert Traba are important and still valid: "What to do with the feeling of 'being at home' experienced by the third generation of people born in the western and northern lands who are confronted with the non-Polish landscape of Gdansk, Olsztyn, Wroclaw? Should we bring all this to the Mazovian-Warsaw image?" (Traba, 2006: 17).

When a few years ago I looked at sociological research conducted on the communities of Wroclaw in the context of the city's cultural heritage, I noticed little emphasis on the topic of everyday relationship of residents with the city's inherited matter. I wrote then:

> There is still no answer to the question whether, indeed (and not at the level of declarations obtained in quantitative research) the identity of subsequent generations of Wroclaw residents is already deprived of the sad shadow of Breslau. Do they feel any dissimilarity of their city (from the cities of central Poland) and their lives in it? Do, for example, members of the third generation of Wroclaw residents, born in the 1970s and already adult, no longer bear the burden of trauma of breaking with the distant land of ancestors, of collision with a material culture of an alien civilization? Do they still think about Wroclaw as a "recovered" city? And if they are already "at home", what does it actually mean? (Biskupska 2018: 311).

In view of the above, I assumed that an important step towards looking at the city from a micronarrative perspective – everyday life included in the colloquial discourse – is to read the narrative foundations of the identity of Wroclaw residents. That is why in this article I undertook to re-read Wroclaw stories written in the 1960s. And, considering the analyses presented above, as well as my reflections based on them, I assume that the words of Elżbieta Dzikowska remain valid and disciplining in the research. At the beginning of the 21st century she noted:

> Today it is important for the inhabitants of Wroclaw to better understand the entire history of their city, including its Prussian and German history, to do one more memory job: to include in the communication cycle also symbolic content that has been rejected or marginalized so far and with which they did not and still do not want to identify. It belongs to this place, it is part of the local identity and the people living here today have become, whether they want it or not, also its depositors. One must enter into/the dialog with uncomfortable heritage, even in dispute, negotiate one's cultural distance with it, and try to understand it (Dzikowska 2006: 179).

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